

109TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# S. 2500

To enhance the counseling and readjustment services provided by the  
Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 4, 2006

Mr. AKAKA (for himself, Mrs. CLINTON, Mr. LAUTENBERG, and Mr. KERRY)  
introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the  
Committee on Veterans' Affairs

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## A BILL

To enhance the counseling and readjustment services pro-  
vided by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for  
other purposes.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2       *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3       **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4       This Act may be cited as the “Healing the Invisible  
5       Wounds Act of 2006”.

1 **SEC. 2. NOTICE AND WAIT ON MODIFICATION OF HAN-**  
2 **DLING OF POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DIS-**  
3 **ORDER UNDER DISABILITY COMPENSATION**  
4 **RATING SYSTEM.**

5 The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may not implement  
6 any modification in the manner in which Post-Traumatic  
7 Stress Disorder (PTSD) is handled in the rating of serv-  
8 ice-connected disabilities for purposes of the payment of  
9 compensation under chapter 11 of title 38, United States  
10 Code, until the date that is six months after the date on  
11 which the Secretary submits to the Committees on Vet-  
12 erans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives  
13 a report on such proposed modification.

14 **SEC. 3. COUNSELING FOR MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL**  
15 **GUARD AND RESERVES RETURNING FROM**  
16 **DEPLOYMENT IN A COMBAT THEATER.**

17 (a) EXPANSION OF REUNION AND RE-ENTRY FROM  
18 COMBAT PROGRAM.—

19 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans  
20 Affairs, in consultation with the Secretary of De-  
21 fense, shall provide to each member of the National  
22 Guard and Reserves described in subsection (b) the  
23 counseling services described in subsection (c) upon  
24 the return of such member from a deployment in a  
25 combat theater.

1           (2) PURPOSE OF SERVICES.—The purpose of  
2           the counseling services provided under this section is  
3           to assist members of the National Guard and Re-  
4           serves described in subsection (b) in making the re-  
5           adjustment to civilian life in the United States upon  
6           their return from a combat theater.

7           (b) COVERED MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL GUARD  
8           AND RESERVES.—A member of the National Guard and  
9           Reserves described in this subsection is any member of  
10          the National Guard or the Reserves who serves on active  
11          duty in a combat theater.

12          (c) COUNSELING TO BE PROVIDED.—The counseling  
13          services to be provided under this subsection shall include  
14          the following:

15               (1) A session of group counseling provided to  
16               such member together with such other number of  
17               members as the Secretary determines appropriate  
18               for the purpose of this section.

19               (2) A session, of not less than one hour dura-  
20               tion, of private counseling provided to such member.

21               (3) A presentation on counseling-related mat-  
22               ters, including on the readjustment counseling and  
23               related mental health services available under section  
24               1712A of title 38, United States Code, provided to  
25               the family of such member.

1           (4) Such other counseling services as the Sec-  
2       retary determines appropriate for the purpose of this  
3       section.

4       (d) MEANS OF PROVIDING COUNSELING.—Coun-  
5       seling services shall be provided under this section through  
6       the personnel of the centers (commonly referred to as “vet  
7       centers”) providing readjustment counseling and related  
8       mental health services for veterans under section 1712A  
9       of title 38, United States Code.

10       (e) TIMING OF COUNSELING.—The counseling pro-  
11       vided to a member of the National Guard and Reserves  
12       under paragraphs (1) and (2) of subsection (c) shall be  
13       provided not later than 14 days after the date of the re-  
14       turn of the member to the member’s home following a de-  
15       ployment to a combat theater.

16       (f) RETENTION ON ACTIVE DUTY PENDING COUN-  
17       SELING.—A member of the National Guard and Reserves  
18       described in subsection (a) shall be retained on active duty  
19       in the Armed Forces until the provision of the counseling  
20       required to be provided under paragraphs (1) and (2) of  
21       subsection (c).

22       (g) ADDITIONAL COUNSELING.—The Secretary shall  
23       ensure that the centers referred to in subsection (d), as  
24       part of the discharge of their functions under section  
25       1712A of title 38, United States Code, provide, and have

1 sufficient resources to provide, such follow-up and addi-  
2 tional counseling services to veterans described in sub-  
3 section (a) as such veterans shall request from such cen-  
4 ters, in accordance with applicable law.

5 (h) REPORT.—

6 (1) REPORT REQUIRED.—Not later than one  
7 year after the date of the commencement of the pro-  
8 vision of counseling services under this section, the  
9 Secretary shall submit to the appropriate committees  
10 of Congress a report on the provision of such serv-  
11 ices under this section.

12 (2) ELEMENTS.—The report required by para-  
13 graph (1) shall include information as follows:

14 (A) The cost of the provision of counseling  
15 services under this section.

16 (B) An assessment of the efficacy of such  
17 services in meeting the readjustment needs of  
18 veterans described in subsection (a).

19 (C) An assessment (based on surveys or  
20 such information as the Secretary considers ap-  
21 propriate) of the satisfaction of veterans de-  
22 scribed in subsection (a) with the services pro-  
23 vided under this section, including the manner  
24 in which such services are provided.

1           (D) The number of followup visits for  
 2           counseling and services of veterans described in  
 3           subsection (a) and the number of visits of fam-  
 4           ily members of such veterans for counseling and  
 5           services.

6           (E) Such recommendations as the Sec-  
 7           retary considers appropriate in order to en-  
 8           hance the services provided under this section,  
 9           including the manner in which such services are  
 10          provided.

11          (i) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS DE-  
 12          FINED.—In this section, the term “appropriate commit-  
 13          tees of Congress” means—

14               (1) the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs and  
 15          Armed Services of the Senate; and

16               (2) the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs and  
 17          Armed Services of the House of Representatives.

18          (j) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is  
 19          authorized to be appropriated to the Department of Vet-  
 20          erans Affairs for fiscal year 2007, such sums as may be  
 21          necessary for the provision of counseling services under  
 22          this section.

23      **SEC. 4. FUNDING FOR VET CENTERS.**

24          There is authorized to be appropriated to the Depart-  
 25          ment of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2007,

1 \$180,000,000 for the provision of readjustment counseling  
2 and related mental health services through centers (com-  
3 monly referred to as “vet centers”) under section 1712A  
4 of title 38, United States Code.

